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General Assembly
Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

82nd plenary meeting
Wednesday, 6 December 2000, 11 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

Agenda item 17 (*continued*)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(a) Appointment of members of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/55/652)

The President: The Fifth Committee recommends in paragraph 11 of its report, document A/55/652, that the General Assembly appoint the following persons as members of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2001: Mr. Andrzej Abraszewski, Mr. Manlan Narcisse Ahounou, Mr. Felipe Mabilingan, Mr. Besley Maycock and Mr. C. S. M. Mselle.

May I take it that the Assembly appoints these persons?

It was so decided.

(b) Appointment of members of the Committee on Contributions

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/55/424/Add.1)

The President: In paragraph 5 of its report, document A/55/424/Add.1, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly appoint the following persons as members of the Committee on Contributions for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2001: Mr. Petru Dumitriu, Mr. Chinmaya Gharekhan, Mr. Ihor Hummeny, Mr. Gebhard Benjamin Kandanga, Mr. David Leis and Mr. Kazuo Watanabe.

In paragraph 6 of the same report, the Fifth Committee also recommends that the General Assembly appoint Mr. Henry Fox as a member of the Committee on Contributions for a term of office beginning on 6 December 2000 and ending on 31 December 2001.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint these persons?

It was so decided.

(c) Appointment of a member of the Board of Auditors

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/55/653)

The President: In paragraph 5 of its report, document A/55/653, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly appoint the Court of Audit

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of France as a member of the Board of Auditors for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 July 2001.

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to appoint the Court of Audit of France?

It was so decided.

(d) Confirmation of the appointment of members of the Investments Committee

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/55/654)

The President: The Fifth Committee recommends in paragraph 5 of its report, document A/55/654, that the General Assembly confirm the appointment by the Secretary-General of the following persons as members of the Investments Committee for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2001: Mr. Ahmad Abdullatif, Mr. Fernando Chico Pardo and Mr. J. Y. Pillay.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to confirm the appointment of these persons?

It was so decided.

(e) Appointment of members of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/55/655)

The President: In paragraph 5 of its report, document A/55/655, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly appoint the following persons as members of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2001: Mr. Omer Yousif Bireedo, Mr. Spyridon Flogaitis and Ms. Brigitte Stern.

May I consider that the Assembly appoints these persons?

It was so decided.

(g) Appointment of members of the International Civil Service Commission

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/55/656)

The President: In paragraph 7 of its report, document A/55/656, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly appoint the following persons as members of the International Civil Service Commission for a four-year term of office beginning 1 January 2001: Mr. Ernest Rusita, Mr. El Hassane Zahid, Mr. Asda Jayanama, Mr. C. M. Shafi Sami and Mr. Alexei Fedotov.

May I take it that the General Assembly appoints these persons?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 17.

Agenda item 47 (*continued*)

Assistance in mine action

Draft resolution (A/55/L.44/Rev.2 and Corr.1)

The President: Members will recall that the General Assembly held the debate on this item at its 73rd plenary meeting, on 28 November 2000. In this connection, the General Assembly has before it a revised draft resolution issued as document A/55/L.44/Rev.2 and Corr.1.

I now give the floor to the representative of France to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.44/Rev.2.

Mr. Le Bret (France) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the European Union and all of the sponsors, I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.44/Rev.2 and Corr.1, "Assistance in mine action".

I shall not go back over the substance of the text, which was covered during the earlier debate in plenary meeting. I simply want to say that the document now before us in A/55/L.44/Rev.2 and Corr.1 is the result of informal consultations that allowed for agreement on the revised text among the sponsors and all interested delegations.

In this connection, I would like to thank all those delegations that participated in the negotiations for their support and for the goodwill demonstrated throughout the sometimes difficult process. The authors of the draft resolution trust that it can be adopted this year by consensus, like others before it.

The President: I should like to inform members that the sponsor of the amendments contained in document A/55/L.51 has withdrawn the amendments.

We shall now proceed to take a decision on draft resolution A/55/L.44/Rev.2 and Corr.1.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/55/L.44/Rev.2 and Corr.1?

Draft resolution A/55/L.44/Rev.2 and Corr.1 was adopted (resolution 55/120).

The President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to make statements in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted.

May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Amer (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation joined the consensus on this draft resolution, but we would like to place on record that we do not accept all its elements. In particular, I would like to refer to the first operative paragraph, which welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations in assistance in mine action. Although we concur with the information contained in the report, we note that it concentrates on mines that were planted recently and does not deal with mines planted earlier, from which my country suffers. During the Second World War millions of mines were planted on Libyan territory. These mines continue to kill many people, destroy the property of many people and hamper our efforts in the field of combating desertification and expansion of agrarian reform.

Nor does the report deal with the responsibility of countries that have planted mines on the territories of other countries for paying the necessary reparations or for the removal of such mines. At previous sessions of the General Assembly, we drew attention to the problems we were experiencing due to this situation. We would again like to draw the attention of the Secretary-General to this matter.

We had expressed hope that the United Nations would pay the necessary attention to mines planted in the past. Unfortunately, the report presented at this session does not differ from the previous reports; it concentrates only on mines that were planted recently. Therefore, we would like once more to express our concern regarding this trend. We hope that the Secretary-General will avoid such a trend in the future, that he will draw international attention to the problems posed by mines planted in the past and that he will attach as much importance to this problem as to mines that were planted recently. The mines that were planted in the past, just like those planted recently, cause many tragedies. It has become incumbent on the international community to solidify its efforts in confronting such problems.

Mr. Khairat (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The delegation of Egypt has asked for the floor to explain its position with regard to the resolution on assistance in mine action, which has just been adopted.

At the outset, I wish to point out that this is an extremely important subject for Egypt, as it is one of the countries most heavily affected by landmines. In fact, there are about 23 million mines and pieces of unexploded ordnance on Egyptian territory. This hampers the efforts of the Egyptian Government to develop the areas in which those explosives are found. From a practical standpoint, Egypt attaches great importance to efforts to remove landmines and to the way in which the United Nations is dealing with this issue.

Additionally, landmines continue to be a legitimate means of defending a country's borders, especially countries with extensive borders. This fact has prompted Egypt and many other countries to refrain from joining the Ottawa Convention, as the Convention did not take into account the security and defence concerns of such countries.

In the light of these considerations, the delegation of Egypt put forth a number of amendments, which are contained in document A/55/L.51. It did so in an attempt to emphasize the concerns I have referred to in connection with the problem of landmines, as well as to make it possible for the General Assembly to deal with this subject in a comprehensive and integrated manner that takes into account the concerns of all countries. It was in order to support the humanitarian objectives of the resolution and to maintain consensus that the delegation of Egypt withdrew its amendments to the resolution just adopted.

Those amendments included proposed changes to the sixth and eleventh preambular paragraphs, which concern the legitimacy of the responsible use of anti-personnel landmines to defend a country's borders. In that regard, we would like to reaffirm that landmines

continue to be an important element for the security and defence of Egypt's extensive borders and for protecting itself from incursions, terrorism and smuggling. We had hoped those concerns would have been included in the text of the resolution.

Mr. Benítez Versón (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): As it has done in the case of similar draft resolutions in previous years, the delegation of Cuba joined the consensus on the draft resolution contained in document A/55/L.44/Rev.2. As is well known, since the early years of their consideration, resolutions on this question have focused on demining issues. However, their content has gradually been increased to include a much broader and more ambiguous concept referred to as "assistance in mine action". This has made the annual negotiations held prior to the adoption of these resolutions increasingly complex and intensive. What happened this year confirms this. Several weeks of intensive consultations were required to arrive at a draft resolution acceptable to all parties. The text of the resolution we have just adopted reflects overall a very delicate balance that does not allow for selective readings or qualifications of selected parts of the resolution that do not take into account its contents as a whole.

Our delegation would have preferred that the resolution explicitly reflect the legitimate national security concerns associated with anti-personnel mines. Mines continue to be an indispensable weapon for the legitimate defence of many States, in particular for developing countries that do not have the necessary resources to equip themselves with alternative means of defence.

Despite the shortcomings of the resolution, Cuba has supported it primarily because of its interest in contributing to every genuine effort made to eliminate the terrible effects that the indiscriminate and irresponsible use of anti-personnel landmines are having on the civilian populations of many countries.

I would like to conclude by conveying our appreciation to the sponsors of the resolution and to all the delegations that took part in the consultations for their spirit of compromise and the flexibility they demonstrated. That spirit made it possible to conclude successfully the consideration of this question today.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of position.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 47?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 3 (*continued*)

Credentials of representatives to the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly

Second report of the Credentials Committee (A/55/537/Add.1)

The President: The draft resolution recommended by the Credentials Committee in paragraph 10 of its report reads as follows:

"*The General Assembly*,

"*Having considered* the second report of the Credentials Committee and the recommendations contained therein,

"*Approves* the second report of the Credentials Committee."

We shall now take action on the recommendation of the Credentials Committee set forth in paragraph 10 of its second report.

The Credentials Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 55/16 B).

The President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 3.

Announcement

The President: Members will recall that the General Assembly, by its resolution 55/13 of 3 November 2000, decided to convene a special session on HIV/AIDS from 25 to 27 June 2001. The resolution also invited me, in my capacity as President of the General Assembly, to appoint, in consultation with Member States, two facilitators to assist in carrying out the preparatory process to ensure effective participation of all countries. In this regard, I have conducted intensive consultations, both through the Chairmen of

regional groups and with a significant number of individual delegations representing all regions.

It is my great pleasure to announce my decision to appoint Ambassador Penny Wensley, Permanent Representative of Australia, and Ambassador Ibra Deguène Ka, Permanent Representative of Senegal, as the two facilitators of the preparatory process of the special session on HIV/AIDS. Both are highly praised for their excellence as mediators and consensus builders. Both are also persons with exceptional skills to seek and find solutions to different and sensitive issues.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.